

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 SSC-01 DRC-01 AID-20 EURE-00

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P R 251847Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 600

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA

USNMR SHAPE

BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 2481

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: NEW BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TAKES SHAPE

: BRUSSELS 2445 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. NEW BELGIAN GOVERNMENT LED BY FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PRIME MINISTER LEO TINDEMANS HAS TAKEN SHAPE UNDER MOST INAUSPICIOUS CONDITIONS. SURVIVAL OF SOCIAL CHRISTIAN LIBERAL MINORITY COALITION IS PRECARIOUS. IT CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL SURVIVE ITS FIRST PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE NEXT WEEK, ALTHOUGH IT
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IS PROBABLY THAT SUPPORT BY FEDERALIST/LINGUISTIC PARTIES

WILL BE FORTHCOMING INITIALLY. PSB LEADER (AND EC VICE PRESIDENT) HENRI SIMONET TELLS AMBASSADOR STRAUSSZ-HUPE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSB) COUNTS ON EARLY DEMISE OF TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT AND, HE IMPLIES, WILL NOT SAVE IT BY REVERSING DECISION NOT TO PARTICIPATE. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMATION. LEO TINDEMANS (FLEMISH SOCIAL-CHRISTIAN/CVP) WAS FORMALLY DESIGNATED PRIME MINISTER BY KING BAUDOUIN APRIL 24. NEW CABINET WAS SWORN IN APRIL 25. FORMATION OF CABINET (REPORTED SEPARATELY) WAS DELAYED SOME HOURS BY LAST MINUTE PROBLEMS CENTERED ON DIVISION OF POSTS ALLOCATED TO SOCIAL CHRISTIANS, BETWEEN QUOTE REGULAR UNQUOTE AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT/CHRISTIAN WORKERS MOVEMENT (MOC) FACTIONS.

3. PERSONALITIES. NEW CABINET INCLUDES VAN ELSLANDE (CVP) AS FOREIGN MINISTER, VANDEN BOEYANTS (PSC) AS DEFENSE MINISTER (COMBINED WITH DUAL ASSIGNMENT AS MINISTER FOR BRUSSELS AFFAIRS), WILL DE CLEACQ (FLEMISH LIBERAL/PVV) AS FINANCE MINISTER, AND ANDRE OLEFF (PSC/MOC) AS MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. ACCORDING TO DAVIGNON, OLEFFE APPOINTMENT IS INTENDED TO CATER TO WALLONIAN FRANCOPHONE RESERVATIONS RE FLEMISH PREDOMINANCE IN NEW GOVERNMENT.

4. DOSAGE. FACT NEW GOVERNMENT IS NARROWLY-BASED HAS SERVED AT LEAST TO PERMIT REDUCTION IN CABINET TO 19 MINISTERS (INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER) AND 6 STATE SECRETARIES. PATTERN FOR MINISTERS, BALANCING PARTIES AND REGIONS:

--PRIME MINISTER (CVP)

--SIX PSC

-- SIX CVP

--THREE PVV

--THREE PLP

5. VULNERABILITIES. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM THAT IT DESPITE ITS FORMAL BALANCE, IT OVERREPRESENTS FLANDERS AT THE EXPENSE OF WALLONIA AND BRUSSELS. THE FLEMISH CVP AND PVV ARE STRONG AND HEALTHY PARTIES THAT EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT FLEMISH INTERESTS. THE PSC REPRESENTS A COMPARATIVELY SMALLER SEGMENT OF WALLONIAN OPINION, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THE WALLONIAN LIBERALS (PLP) ARE WEAK AND DIVIDED. THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE VULNERABLE TO STRONG PRESSURE FROM THE FEDERALIST-LINGUISTIC PARTIES WHOSE SUPPORT WILL BE CRITICAL WHEN THE GOVERNMENT SEEKS A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE NEXT WEEK, AND CAN EXPECT NO HELP FROM THE SOCIALISTS.

6. SIMONET. PSB LEADER HENRI SIMONET TOLD AMBASSADOR

APRIL 26 THAT TINDEMANS HAS PLAYED HIMSELF OUT IN THE COURSE OF HIS EXHAUSTING AND UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE A MAJORITY COALITION. SIMONET ALSO STRESSED THE SOLIDITY OF THE PST DECISION TO STAY OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT, IMPLYING A PREFERENCE TO SEE TINDEMANS FALL AND NOT TO SAVE HIM BY REVERSING DECISION ON NON-PARTICIPATION.

7. COMMENT. AS WE HAVE REPORTED EARLIER, SIMONET AWAITS THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT TO DETACH HIMSELF FROM THE EC AND TO TRY FOR THE PREMIERSHIP HIMSELF. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE PSB CAN IN FACT BENEFIT FROM TINDEMANS' FAILURE WHEN ITS OWN RESPONSIBILITIES IN MAKING BELGIUM UNGOVERNABLE ARE SO CLEAR. STRAUZ-HUPE

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